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AUTHOR	Buddy, Juanita Warren
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perceptions of new library media specialists about the usefulness of orientation and professional support programs occurring within the first two years of employment. A 56-item questionnaire with rating scales and open-ended questions was designed to answer five research questions: (1) "What factors, related to personnel and time frame, were involved in the orientation program?" (2) "What topics/activities presented in the orientation program did new library media specialists perceive as useful?" (3) "Who provided professional support to new library media specialists?" "What were the frequencies of contact and quality of the support?" (4) "Which informational resources were helpful to new library media specialists in fulfilling their responsibilities?" and (5) "Who encouraged or invited new library media specialists to participate in professional development activities?" "How helpful were these activities to new library media specialists?" The questionnaire was sent to 48 pre-selected library media specialists with two or fewer years of experience. Eight schools systems in the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area were selected. Data from 38 usable questionnaires revealed 70.1% of the respondents participated in orientation programs lasting one to three days. Programs were generally conducted by the system-level media coordinator. Most topics/activities were rated useful by the participants. Two topics/activities related to monitoring and information literacy skills instructional units were ranked lowest as useful. Individuals in the school system frequently provided superior to satisfactory support to new library media specialists, when compared to specific groups of professionals outside of the school system. Outdated book collections and audiovisual equipment were major problems encountered by respondents. Most locally-developed informational resources, professional journals and magazines were rated helpful. Appendices include the cover letter and questionnaire, sample quotations representing initial problems new library specialists encountered, and comments or "words of wisdom." (AEF)

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ED 422 003

PERCEPTIONS OF NEW LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS ABOUT ORIENTATION AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS

by

Juanita Warren Buddy

A SCHOLARLY STUDY

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for
the Degree of Specialist in Education in Library Media Technology in the
Department of Middle-Secondary Education and
Instructional Technology in the College of Education of
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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF NEW LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALISTS ABOUT ORIENTATION AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS

by

JUANITA WARREN BUDDY

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perceptions of new library media specialists about the usefulness of orientation and professional support programs occurring within the first two years of employment.

Method and Procedures

A fifty-six item questionnaire with rating scales and open-ended questions was designed to answer five research questions. The questionnaire was sent to forty-eight pre-selected library media specialists with two or fewer years of experience. Eight school systems in the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area were selected.

The data was analyzed using the computer software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results

Data from thirty-eight useable questionnaires revealed 70.1% of the respondents participated in orientation programs lasting one to three days. Programs were generally conducted by the system-level media coordinator. Most topics/activities were rated useful by the participants. Two topics/activities--related to mentoring and information literacy skills instructional units--were ranked lowest as useful. It was noted these two items were not presented in many of the orientation programs.

Individuals in the school system frequently provided superior to satisfactory support to new library media specialists, when compared to specific groups of professionals outside the school system. Outdated book collections and audiovisual equipment were major problems encountered by respondents. Most locally-developed informational resources, professional journals and magazines were rated helpful. Two externally-produced resources were rated somewhat useful. Other library media specialists, system-level media coordinators, principals, and other selected individuals encouraged respondents to participate in professional development activities.

Conclusions

Providing meaningful and useful orientation programs for new library media specialists should be continued. However, mentoring programs, currently underutilized as a strategy to support new library media specialists, should be investigated further. The issue of outdated book collections encountered by new library media specialists, echos an existing national trend. Efforts to keep locally-developed informational resources current and accurate should be continued, as well as opportunities for professional growth.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview

New library media specialists are enthusiastically pleased to accept the assignment of providing and managing an effective library media program for students, teachers, and administrators. Implementing a meaningful orientation program and establishing a network of support from other professionals are two strategies school systems may set up to sustain this enthusiasm.

In reviewing educational literature, many references outlined orientation and support programs for beginning teachers. The limited number of references in the literature on these two topics about library media specialists aroused concern. The roles and responsibilities of library media specialists have changed in response to computer and media technologies, and school reform initiatives. These changes have stressed the need to provide informative orientation and strong support programs for new library media specialists.

Coupled with the issue of changes in roles and responsibilities of the

library media specialist, historical documentation has revealed a shortage of library media specialists. In 1987, Markuson reported a shortage of school librarians. Almost a decade later, Scheetz (1995) echoed the message related to a shortage of library media specialists based on survey results from school district administrators. (p. 5) The following quotation from *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 1998-99* suggested a shortage of librarians will continue into the 21st century.

> Slow employment growth, coupled with an increasing number of MLS [Master of Library Science] graduates will result in more applicants competing for fewer jobs.... Some openings for librarians will stem from projected slower-than-average employment growth through the year 2006, reflecting budgetary constraints in school, public, and college and university libraries. (p. 174)

In support of this projection, demographics from a survey, "The More Things Change...Survey Results," conducted by the staff of *School Librarian's Workshop* reflected more than 64% of the responding library media specialists had 11-21+ years of experience, while 36% have 0-10 years in the profession. (p. 1) As the more experienced segment of the profession retires,

as projected in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, the urgency related to employing and retaining qualified library media specialists will intensify.

Combining this employment trend with President William Clinton's comments in The State of the Union Address (1998) "...I also propose a school construction tax cut to help communities modernize or build 5,000 new schools" (p. 47) emphasized the pending need to train and employ more library media specialists. Supporting these new library media specialists as they begin their roles of information specialist, teacher, and instructional consultant would be a wise and timely investment.

Changes in the roles and responsibilities of library media specialists are being fueled by advancing information technology, new instructional models, innovative collection development and management principles, and ongoing in-service programming. Clearly, the historical shortages of library media specialists, the projected national initiative for constructing new schools, and the focuses on restructuring initiatives in schools to increase student achievement, have an urgent message for all school districts. It is important that every effort be made to ensure new library media specialists experience success. Thus it is crucial that meaningful orientation programs and consistent, committed support from other professionals are provided.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perceptions of new library media specialists about the usefulness of orientation and professional support programs occurring within the first two years of employment. Five focus questions were used for this investigation.

1) What factors, related to personnel and time frame, were involved in the orientation program?
2) What topics/activities presented in the orientation program did new library media specialists perceive as useful?
3) Who provided professional support to new library media specialists? What were the frequencies of contact and quality of the support?
4) Which informational resources were helpful to new library media specialists in fulfilling their responsibilities?
5) Who encouraged or invited new library media specialists to participate in professional development activities? How helpful were these activities to new library media specialists?

Significance of the Study

New library media specialists have entered a profession where the roles and responsibilities of the position change in response to new technologies and school reform initiatives. It was anticipated the results of this study would provide administrators and veteran library media specialists valuable insight to evaluate current orientation and support programs, to redesign existing programs, or to provide suggestions in designing new programs.

Assumption

For this study, it was assumed new library media specialists were participants in an orientation program followed by a meaningful and consistent support program.

Delimitations

This study was limited to library media specialists with two or fewer years of experience in a public school library media center. Eight school systems in metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia were selected. The list included Atlanta City Schools, Clayton County, DeKalb County, Douglas County, Fulton County, Henry County, Gwinnett County, and Rockdale County.

Definition of Terms

New Library Media Specialist--denotes a certificated professional employed in the school library media center for two or fewer years in a public school.

Orientation Program--describes a formal, structured "process by which an organization helps its employees to settle into a new job....It is to enable the new staff to become effective within the organization both smoothly and swiftly" (Parry, 1993, p. 1).

Professional Development-- ".... is a self-motivated, collegial, and voluntary process of learning relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (French, 1997, p. 39).

Professional Support Program--describes an individual or group of professionals providing advisement to new employees about organizational polices and procedures, and issues related to adjusting to the job.

Veteran Library Media Specialist---denotes a certificated professional employed as a library media specialist for three years or more.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

A review of business and personnel literature revealed the importance of providing orientation and support programs for new employees. Likewise, numerous periodical articles in general education literature described orientation or induction programs and support strategies for new teachers in elementary and secondary schools. Few references outlined employee orientation/induction programs for employees in libraries. Two books, *New Employee Orientation* by H. Scott Davis (1994) and *Inductions* by Julie Parry (1993), offered valuable assistance in designing and implementing orientation programs for library staff. Periodical references and these books proved to be useful in identifying commonalities among orientation program designs and support networks. In most employment environments, the questions and informational needs for new employees were similar.

By examining orientation and support models used by departments of personnel or human resources in business, academic, and public libraries, strategies have been identified for adaptation in working with school library media specialists.

Orientation Program

While orientation models have similarities related to components and design, the time period allowed for new employees to begin fulfilling all their major responsibilities have varied from a few days to several months. Unlike business and post-secondary institutions, new elementary and secondary teachers have been "expected to perform [their] full complement of duties immediately while learning them at the same time. The beginning teacher has the same tasks and responsibilities as the most seasoned teacher on the staff" (Wong and Wong, pp. 16, 17). Like beginning teachers within the first few days, new school library media specialists have begun performing a host of important tasks, including operating and maintaining the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC), preparing and processing orders for print, audiovisual, and electronic resources, and working with teachers in the instructional process. Therefore, an effective orientation program just may be a prerequisite for retaining new library media specialists.

Unlike teachers, who worked with and were supported by other teachers on the same grade level or in the same discipline, new library media specialists have frequently worked alone, or with the assistance of a paraprofessional or clerk. (Miller & Shontz, 1997, p. 32) This personnel

configuration appeared to have become the norm. In the absence of another trained library media professional, new library media specialists depended on the library media clerk, teachers and administrators to solve issues and concerns inherit in managing a comprehensive library media program.

New library media specialists generally have assumed the administrative role of the library media program within the first days of employment. Thus, it has been critical that these professionals receive, in a timely manner, information about local policies, organizational practices and procedures, and system-wide and local school personnel issues that impact the library media program. This type of informational update has occurred traditionally during orientation programs in other organizations as well, e.g., business.

In general, many orientation programs have followed similar formats which introduced the employer's goals, policies, and operational procedures. In reviewing program formats designed to focus on, the new employee, the first component identified was the employee's employment history. Julie Parry (1993) has categorized several of these employment histories which have application for new library media specialists. **Beginners** were individuals new to the workforce; **returners** represented individuals returning to the workforce after a period of absence; **ethnic minorities**

included those from difference cultural, linguistic or religious backgrounds; and **individuals with physical disabilities or special medical conditions** whose needs were health related. (pp. 8-10)

This researcher has suggested two additional categories that pertained to K-12 schools and has coined additional descriptors. First, the **reclaimed** were veteran library media specialists formerly employed by the school system and who returned to work in the school system. Second, **transferees** described experienced library media specialists transferring from one school system to another.

The next component to be considered was the program outline. It focused on goals and objectives of the orientation sessions, which in many instances were appropriate for group and individual activities. This component also provided opportunities for evaluating the orientation program, and generating suggestions for revising the orientation endeavor. (Parry, 1993, p. 5)

Attention to scheduling and length of sessions was the third component. It was imperative that new employees understand and retain the information presented and have a sense of confidence in accurately applying the new information. Traditionally, employees new to elementary and secondary education have participated in a series of orientation activities

provided by the school system for one or two days just prior to the beginning of the school year. Naturally, the question has been asked, "Does so few days of orientation give new employees time to internalize the information and map out action plans before meeting members of the local school community?" One response to the question has been offered from the business sector. "One-or two-day orientation programs fail to involve the new hires and present the information they need to succeed in the company" ("Speed New Hires to Success," p. 1).

Additional time has been needed, in many situations, for new employees to process new information related to the position. In the book, *Induction*, Parry (1993) stated, "It is generally agreed that too much information in the early stages can lead to new recruits becoming overloaded and unable to absorb anything further.... Successful induction programmes are often divided into sections covering the first day, the first week, the first month, and so on" (p. 19).

Another component of an effective orientation program was the participation of selected presenters. Such individuals shared information based on areas of professional responsibility and expertise. Using the Department of Educational Media in the DeKalb County School System as a point of reference, the system-level the media coordinator has traditionally

scheduled these presenters. This administrator has served as the primary presenter providing information related to: (1) operational procedures and guidelines for managing the library media program, (2) funding for purchase of resources, (3) support networks among library media personnel, (4) professional development and in-service opportunities, and (5) the performance evaluation instrument for library media specialists. Other presenters have included building-level administrators, representatives from cable and public television outlining services and programming, and staff members from special programs and services in the school system, e.g., Fernbank Science Center in the DeKalb County School System.

The last component focused on the preparation of informational packets. By compiling and packaging useful information, new employees have been able to participate in discussions during the orientation program and later refer to the information for specific assignments or procedures. The selection of items in packets included job descriptions; personnel directories with names of employees, position titles, and phone numbers; handbooks; organizational chart; map(s) of the facility(ies); a directory of informational resources; calendar of holidays and special events; and brochures outlining employer's goals and services to employees. (Davis, 1994, p. 76; Beeler, 1995, p. 8; Lindo, 1994, p. 1)

Each of these components--employees' employment histories, program outline, scheduling and length of sessions, presenters, and informational packets--has contributed to making orientation sessions meaningful. When comprehensive orientations have been followed by systematic, professional support networks, the enthusiasm of new employees, e.g., library media specialists has been retained for a longer period of time.

Professional Support

New employees have had feelings of excitement and celebration about the employment opportunity, but they have also had feelings of uncertainty about future interactions in the new role. "Mentoring: A Professional Growth Strategy for School Library Media Specialists" (van Deusen and Kraus, 1995) outlined three primary worries of newly-hired library media specialists--confidence, technical knowledge, and local school culture. (p. 31)

Stephen P. Gordon, author of the book *How to Help Beginning Teachers Succeed* (1991), noted environmental difficulties for the new teacher. Three of the difficulties were especially applicable to library media specialists-- unclear expectations (school rules and procedures, and expectations of others in the school), role conflict (professional demands vs. personal life schedule), and reality shock (nonacademic duties, discipline,

paperwork). (pp. 1-5).

Joan Halford (1998) cited the following quotation by Linda Darling Hammond, executive director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, which applied to new teachers, but also applicable to new library media specialists. "To retain new teachers [library media specialists], we must do two things: design good schools in which to teach and employ mentoring" (p. 34). Thus these concerns and difficulties cited by vanDeusan & Kraus and Gordon have become the springboards for establishing mentoring programs for new educators.

In the book, *Mentoring*, Fisher (1994), defined a mentoring system as, "A strategy adopted by organizations who wish to encourage older, or more experienced employees, to assist in the development of new members of the staff" (p. 61). Many articles in educational and personnel publications have described guidelines for developing mentoring programs, accentuated the importance of providing a mentor for new teachers/employees, outlined the logistics of selecting and training individuals to serve as mentors, and emphasized the importance of evaluating mentoring programs.

Fisher (1994) has outlined seven descriptions of individuals serving as mentors. Four of those were recognizable in a K-12 setting and are listed.

Life mentor is a mentor who has interest in the protégé's life as well as career. Life mentors may also advise on a protégé's career.

Major mentor is a mentor who establishes all three of the following components in the mentoring relationship with a protégé : attraction, action, and affect.

By way of explanation, [an] **attraction** [exists] between the mentor and protégé [so that] the mentor will take **action** on behalf of the protégé...in terms of support and encouragement, [thus] the protégé will be **affected** by the mentor in a positive way (p. 4).

Partial mentor is one of several advisors or mentors a person may establish over the course of [his or her life] or careers.

Secondary mentor is a mentor established by a protégé, usually in an informal way, to assist with a specific area of the protégé's life. (p. 61)

Numerous references in the literature cited examples of local school and system-wide mentoring programs. The article, "Building Professional Partnerships: A Mentor Program for Special Education Teachers" by Holly Broom (1996), acknowledged the challenges of new special education teachers. Locally developed, The Special Education Mentor Program had a goal "to provide peer support and professional development opportunities for new special education teachers" (p. 1).

The administrative leadership in a mentoring program for new employees has been vitally important. "A Mentoring Program for New Teachers: Ensuring Success" by Harris (1995) suggested principals must play a pivotal role in ensuring the survival and success of first-year teachers by providing a mentor program. (p. 98) Halford (1998) concurred by citing James Rowley's comment, "Having leaders, particularly principals, who are committed to the notion of helping beginning teachers find success makes a critical difference" (p. 35). This same level of support for library media specialists has been helpful.

vanDeusen and Kraus (1995) cited the influence of the mentoring program available to new library media specialists. "The sponsorship of a mentor facilitates the quick assimilation of newcomers into the group. Such cohesiveness among library media professionals has resulted in a unified

voice in the district advocating for the program..."(p. 31).

The Hawaii Association of School Librarians (HASL) recognized and responded to new library media specialists' need of support from other professionals.

> With the influx of new professionals, veteran library media specialists also began to feel an increasing responsibility to help newcomers through their difficult first year... Since 1988, networking activities have grown to include a buddy system for new library media specialists, a site-assistance team of retired library media specialists, a series of idea exchange forums, a printed Warmline directory, satellite HELP groups on the neighboring islands in the state, and a newsletter. (Harada, 1996, p. 78)

In addition to these mentoring programs, computer technology has added a new dimension called telementoring, mentoring via the use of electronic communication. "Telementoring uses e-mail and the World Wide Web to facilitate formal and informal communication among students, teachers, and professionals in the outside world" (Tsikalas, 1997, p. 1). Created in 1996 Teachers.Net, ... "an electronic chatboard, has provided

teachers from around the world opportunities to discuss issues and concerns related to the profession" (Teachers.Net, 1998).

Opportunities for telementoring have been made available specifically for library media specialists. Joy McGregor (1997) has initiated a virtual mentoring program for students in school librarianship class at the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Women's University. Serving as mentors, veteran library media specialists communicated via e-mail with students in the class about "some educational issues that impact resource-based learning and the entire school library program" (p. 1).

Thousands of library media specialists have begun sharing via LM_NET, " a discussion group open to school library media specialists worldwide, and to people involved with the school library media field.... [It] can be used by library media people for many different things--to ask for input, share ideas and information, and link programs that are geographically remote, etc." (LM_NET, p. 1). Library media specialists have responded to requests from new library media specialists for ideas and suggestions on many topics, e.g., successfully launching the first days of the school year, as noted in the following e-mail messages from the LM_NET Listserv Archives.

> I'm in my fourth year at a 7-12 school, and the biggest advice I can give you is NOT to change anything for the first semester. Talk to everyone--colleagues, administrators, secretaries--and learn how they interact before jumping in and making lots of (probably long overdue) changes. It'll make the others in your building far more receptive to you.... (Long, 1996, p. 5)

> The best advice I was given was not to change anything for the first year.... The best I can give is do not quit during the first year. I can remember the problems I had with feeling inferior that first year (and second and third) and yet, I don't know any one else that can do the job better. So hang in there. (Pop, 1996, p. 8)

State-wide electronic listservs like the Georgia Library Media Specialists listserv have met many needs of library media specialists. Numerous topics have been shared, e.g., legislative decisions about funding, purchases of audiovisual materials or equipment, announcements regarding conferences or meetings, and job openings for library media specialists in other school districts. A list of State Library Associated Links has been made

available by LM_NET at the URL: http://ericir.syr.edu/lm_net/stlinks.htm

Like an interstate highway linking travelers to many destinations, professional support from different professionals at various work locations has provided valuable connections for new library media specialists. The overlapping of information has formed stronger professional networks.

Informational Resources

It has been noted in the review of the literature new employees benefit from access to information listed in a variety of resources. Based upon an orientation checklist provided by the Department of Educational Media in the DeKalb County School System, Decatur, Georgia, a list of important resources targeting specific purposes was recommended. These resources included national, regional, and state standards, adopted state and local curriculums, handbooks outlining procedural information in accordance with local Board of Education (LBOE) policies, rosters/ directories of library media specialists in the school system and the local school staff, and textbooks and periodicals related to the administration of a library media program.

In the role of an instructional consultant, as noted in *Information Power* (1988), library media specialists have "translat[ed] curriculum needs

into library media program goals and objectives" (p. 35). In fulfilling this responsibility, the library media specialist's access to the adopted curriculum, whether the state document, e.g., Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) in Georgia, or the school system's locally-developed curriculum, has been critical. The mandated curriculum has impacted and directed the professional's responsibility for collection development and collaborative efforts with teachers in the instructional program. As new national standards in subject content areas are adopted and implemented, the traditional instructional approach of "teaching to the textbook" may soon be inappropriate. Knowledge of changing curriculums has given library media specialists the opportunity to incorporate "emerging information and instructional technologies into the school's curriculum" (*Information Power*, p. 37).

Handbooks have been valuable informational resources. With fast-paced orientation presentations, frequently compressed into two or fewer days, many new employees have been victims of an informational overload.

Hargett (1987) conducted a research study to determine if an orientation session and handbook would improve new library media specialists' understanding of library media policies and procedures. The author hypothesized that "...by February [approximately five months into the school year] beginning media specialists would be familiar with library

media policies and procedures through informal discussions and telephone calls to the district staff and other library media specialists" (p. 29). Results of the research suggested "...beginning media specialists need an information handbook that focuses on district policies and procedures and that an orientation session should be held to go over the handbook. It cannot be assumed that employees are receiving necessary information through informal means" (pp. 32-33).

Davis (1994) noted the importance of handbooks for new employees.

> Whether a library system decides to offer a new employee [an] orientation program or not, all libraries should have some form of staff handbook outlining the basic institutional/library policies and procedures.... A well-produced staff handbook should provide at least partial answers to any questions or job-related concerns a new employee might have and identify more detailed resources or resource persons for information beyond that which is provided in the handbook. (p. 77)

At least three types of handbooks have been used by library media specialists in the DeKalb County School System. The Georgia Department of

Education (GDOE) provided the handbook, *Media Specialist Handbook: You Are the Key*. This resource included the roles and responsibilities of system-level and school personnel involved in library media programs, state and regional accrediting association standards, e.g., Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) standards for quantity of resources, design of facilities, ratios of media personnel, state-wide school library media initiatives, and organizations representing library media programs and resources.

The second handbook represented the collective efforts of the county-wide library media personnel. Over several months, the group organized and produced the *Handbook for Library Media Specialists*. It outlined local Board of Education policies, management procedures, required forms for administering the library media center program, and guidelines for complying with standards for state and regional accreditation organizations.

The third handbook, generally prepared by the local school, has been useful to new library media specialists. Rules and regulations governing students, faculty, staff, and volunteers in the school community and even special annual traditions celebrated by the school community have been outlined in this publication.

While handbooks have been valuable resources, most publications are

quickly outdated. Legislative changes, restructuring of state divisions and departments, the demise of state-wide publications, and changes in state Board of Education policies have directly affected the currency and accuracy of state-wide handbooks. Changes in local Board of Education policies, procedural guidelines of school system departments, e.g., purchasing, property control, technology, have demanded that most of the handbooks be revised and updated annually.

The new library media specialists' success has been closely linked to knowing the names and employment assignments of personnel in the local school and in the school system. Wong and Wong (1994) advised new educators to "Get to know your colleagues. Learn from them. Associate with them. Work with them"(p. 24). Davis (1994) has noted,

> Despite a new employee's personal ability at name recall, the fact that he or she is being loaded down with so much information during the first few days on the job makes it very likely that he or she would appreciate help in learning the names of library staff (p. 86).

This advice has been most appropriate for new library media specialists who have the responsibility of serving the entire school

population. To this end, directories or rosters listing personnel and assignments have been invaluable in learning names of individuals in the school and networking with other library media specialists in the school system. Additional suggestions included remembering individuals' names as each employee worn a name tag and experienced faculty and staff members initiated conversations by stating their name and assignment. "Introductions and remembering staff names can be greatly facilitated by producing a staff photo album.... A staff photo album will also be beneficial for veteran staff, particularly those who work in relatively isolated areas...or branch facilities" (Davis, pp. 86-87). Such directories and photo albums, like handbooks, must be updated frequently to remain useful. Computer technology has simplified the process of updating, maintaining, and distributing information

Professional periodicals have been useful for addressing media and technology issues, learning new management strategies, and investigating educational reform and initiatives. Through computer technology several publications have been placed online in their entirety or in selected portions, e.g., *School Library Journal Online, Technology and Learning Online, American Libraries Online, MultiMedia Schools.* Accessing these online publications has provided a twofold benefit. First, the library media specialist has been provided an opportunity to remain aware of professional

issues and resources. Second, the library media specialist has received unlimited opportunities to improve search strategies for retrieving information electronically.

Information has been equated with power. Informational resources--personnel directories/rosters, curriculum guides, handbooks, periodicals for library media and general education--have empowered library media specialists. Thus empowered library media specialists have the potential to interact with the school community and other library media specialists, and establish an effective library media program.

Professional Development

Library media specialists have been encouraged to sustain a commitment to professional development. As roles and responsibilities have changed, library media specialists have experienced growth through their participation in professionally related activities.

Wesson (1995) provided library media specialists three rationales for professional development-- "sustaining a dedication to one's own growth.... maintaining a supportive role related to colleagues' professional growth....and helping to prepare future school librarians" (p. 237).

Many enrichment opportunities have been provided for professional

development through formal staff development classes or graduate school courses. On an individual basis, professional development has been attained by reading professional periodicals, completing self-paced tutorial programs for computer software products, and experimenting with original programming ideas and strategies. These activities have allowed library media specialists to capitalize on personal talents and areas of interests. To this list of activities designed to sustain professional commitment, Wesson (1995) suggested, "... attending conferences, observing at other sites, and meeting with other teachers" (p. 238).

In the article "The More Things Change...Survey Results" (1995), the author shared respondents' lists of topics and activities beneficial for professional development. The top priority related to computer technology included library automation, individual software products like HyperCard, online databases, and CD-ROM products. Other non-computer topics included "...children's literature, books for YAs, storytelling, and whole language. Also appearing were trends such as cooperative learning, shared-decision making, resource-based instruction, integrating the curriculum, authentic performance assessment, and distance learning" (p. 3).

Beasley (1996) agreed that the above topics were useful as the library media specialist strives to remain professionally enriched. Continuing the

author added comments related to being proactive in a leadership role in the school. The first recommendation was serving on committees related to curriculum development and its implementation and site-based management teams, if available. A commitment to professional development was appropriately stated as "The school library media specialists must have a commitment--a commitment to the profession and a belief in the importance of the profession. Commitment means staying current in the field" (p. 21). Activities include "read[ing] journals, talk[ing] to colleagues across the state, attend[ing] professional conferences.... A true leader in the library media field is active in professional associations, either as a volunteer or an office holder" (pp. 21-22). This advice was echoed by veteran library media specialists in the article "Voices of Experience: Advice from Our Readers" (1995).

As with supporting teachers, principals have been identified as supporters of professional development activities for library media specialists. Donell and Lawson (1995) reported principals agreed "...that their librarian should be involved in professional library associations. Nearly every principal...encouraged their librarians to participate in professional development opportunities" (p. 77).

In response to increased demands of time, professional development

opportunities have become "customized." Traditional graduate and continuing education classes on university campuses have been augmented with graduate courses/ programs offered via the Internet or through distance education via satellite. Along with staff development courses offered in local schools and school districts and at professional conferences, professionals have options that fit their interests, lifestyle, and location of residence.

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has provided opportunities for library media specialists to complete courses online through the ICONnect program. The primary purpose has been to "offer anyone the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to navigate the Information Superhighway" (AASL, ICONnect, 1998, p. 1).

Professional development has remained the library media specialist's contribution to the profession, school community, and personal enrichment. Barron (1998), stated this truth quite eloquently.

> ...the life of a degree used to be three to five years. Today, with the rapid changes in all of the areas of human learning, technology applications, and political organization that we must master if we are to do our job well, we each had better have a personal [professional] development plan that begins with graduation and ends when we decide to retire. (p. 49)

Summary

A new library media specialist has entered a profession that affords opportunities to serve as "...information specialist, teacher of library media, media consultant, technology specialist, and even librarian" (LeLoup, p. 5). With the multiplicity of evolving roles and responsibilities, an effective orientation program best serves the needs of new library media specialists. Professional support has come from within the ranks of fellow professionals and personal associates. Further, in an information-rich society, new library media specialists have been able to access informational resources in fulfilling requests from students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Also, to remain knowledgeable about technological trends and educational reforms, professional development activities have been recommended. Thus, when linked together, each of the strategies listed above has proven effective in stabilizing the newcomer's anxieties and sustaining the wonder and excitement of being a library media specialist.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Procedures

Annually, new library media specialists have accepted the leadership position of providing an effective library media program in the school. To identify useful strategies for introducing these professionals to the new assignment and providing professional support, this descriptive study, "Perceptions of New Library Media Specialists about Orientation and Support Programs," was developed. It used the survey questionnaire method to gather data.

Population

System-level media coordinators or an administrative designee in eight metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia school systems identified new library media specialists with two or fewer years experience in the field. Lists of names and school assignments were mailed or faxed to the researcher. The eight school systems included Atlanta Public, Clayton County, DeKalb County, Douglas County, Fulton County, Gwinnett County, Henry County, and Rockdale County.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire was developed from the researcher's interactions with new library media specialists as a current departmental responsibility and from a review of the literature. The instrument contained five major divisions, each designed to gain information posed by questions in the study and demographic data. (See Appendix B.)

Early drafts of the survey instrument were critiqued by classmates, the researcher's major professor at Georgia State University (GSU), and the Educational Research Bureau Staff in the College of Education at GSU. Also, selected new and veteran library media specialists in the DeKalb County School System were asked to review the instrument and provide feedback.

The four-page questionnaire included open-ended questions and rating scales for respondents to indicate their answers. An introductory question confirmed a respondent's involvement in a group orientation program. By answering "No," the respondent was instructed to proceed to the end of the first section and answer an open-ended question describing the alternative orientation experience.

Correlations of study questions and questionnaire items have been listed on the next page.

Question 1 - What factors, related to personnel and time frame, were involved in the orientation program? Items: 2-5

Question 2 - What topics/activities presented in the orientation program did new library media specialists perceive as useful? Items: 6-19; Item 20, an open-ended question, allowed respondents to share topics/activities not presented but would have considered useful.

Question 3 -Who provided professional support to new library media specialists? What were the frequency of contact and quality of the support? Items 22-35; Item 36, an open-ended question provided respondents an opportunity to share specific problems encountered as new library media specialists.

Question 4 -Which informational resources were helpful to new library media specialists in fulfilling their responsibilities? Items 37-47

Question 5 - Who encouraged or invited new library media specialists to participate in professional development activities? How helpful were these activities to new library media specialists? Items 48-56

Demographic information about the respondent's professional training, grade level of current school assignment, length of experience as a library media specialist, number of professionals and clerical assistants working in the library media center, and previous employment assignment was requested at the end of the questionnaire. Also, a space for comments was provided.

Data Collection

A copy of the questionnaire and cover letter (Appendix A) along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope were mailed via U. S. Postal Service to forty-four library media specialists at the school address. Four questionnaires were faxed by one school system's media coordinator to selected new library media specialists. This mail-out occurred the week of March 23, 1998. Each mailed questionnaire was assigned a number for the purpose of accounting for responding and non-responding library media specialists. The original list of numbers assigned to each library media specialist was not referred to after the original issuance of the questionnaire. A numerical checklist was maintained to record the date of receipt for each questionnaire. The requested return date was April 3, 1998.

Data Analysis

Assistance with analyzing the data was provided by members of the Educational Research Bureau at GSU, Sheril Smith, Graduate Student, GSU, and Dr. Ganga Persaud, DeKalb County School System. The computer software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. Where appropriate, results were presented in frequencies and percentages.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to evaluate perceptions of new library media specialists (LMSs) concerning orientation and support programs occurring within the first two years of employment. Five focus questions were used for this investigation.

A total of forty-eight questionnaires was mailed (44) and faxed (4) to selected new library media specialists. Forty-three (89.6%) were returned to the researcher. Thirty-eight questionnaires were useable for data analysis.

Description of the Sample

The demographic section of the survey was useful in understanding respondents' educational preparation, current school assignment, available personnel in the library media center, and prior employment in elementary and secondary schools. Thirty-five library media specialists (92.1%) had a Master's Degree; two respondents (5.3%) had an Specialist in Education Degree, and one (2.6%) respondent had a doctorate degree.

Years of experience in the current position varied from two years as noted by ten respondents (26.3%) to three months stated by one individual (2.6%).

Current school assignments revealed the majority (78.9%) of new library media specialists currently worked in elementary schools, with five (13.2%) in middle schools, and the remaining three professionals (7.9%) in high schools. Thirty-four (84.2%) of the respondents worked as the only professional in the library media center. Working with another library media specialist in the library media center was reported by five respondents (13.2%), and one respondent (2.6%) reported working with two other library media specialists.

Thirty-one LMSs (81.6%) worked with a full-time or part-time library media clerk. Six respondents (15.8%) indicated no library media clerk was provided to assist in the library media center.

Thirty-two library media specialists (84.2%) indicated the last two employment assignments were in Pre-Kindergarten through grade twelve (PreK-12) educational settings. Five (13.2%) noted previous positions of employment outside of PreK-12 schools.

Research questions one and two dealt with factors related to the orientation program. A filtering of respondents was necessary. Questionnaire

item one sought to determine if new library media specialists participated in a formal orientation program specifically designed for them. Twenty-seven (70.1%) respondents marked "Yes," while eleven (28.9%) indicated they had not. Respondents indicating "No" were instructed to go to page 2 of the questionnaire and share strategies used by the school system to provide an orientation experience.

Research Question One

What factors, related to personnel and time frame, were involved in the orientation program? Questionnaire items two through five were designed to answer this question.

Eighteen library media specialists (48.6%) indicated the system-level media coordinator was the primary individual conducting the orientation activity. Six library media specialists (16.2%) noted a team composed of the system-level media coordinator and library media specialists provided the orientation.

Table 1 shows the months most often scheduled for orientation sessions with August being the prime choice. Percentages are rounded to nearest whole number.

Table 1

Months Scheduled for Orientations

N=26

Months	Frequency	Percentage
January	1	4.0
July	2	8.0
August	17	65.0
September	5	19.0
October	1	3.0

The length of the orientation program was one day for 18.9% of the respondents, two days for 32.4%, and three days for 10.5%. The rate of attendance during the scheduled orientation program was above 97%.

Research Question Two

What topics/activities presented in the orientation program did new library media specialists perceive as useful? Questionnaire items six to nineteen were designed to answer this question.

Fourteen topics/activities were listed for respondents to rate items as "useful," "not useful," "unsure of usefulness," and "not presented." Eleven

percent or less of the respondents selected the options "not useful" or "unsure of usefulness" on some of the fourteen items. Table 2 presents the responses marked "useful" in rank order. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 2

Usefulness of Orientation Topics/Activities in Rank Order

N=26

LMSs---Library Media Specialists
LMC----Library Media Center

TOPICS/ACTIVITIES	USEFUL Frequency & Percentage	
An informal social event to meet other system LMSs	20	77.0
School Board policies and procedures for LMC operations	20	77.0
Guidelines for purchasing all resources	20	77.0
Introduction of central office personnel	19	73.0
Leadership and role of the media committee	17	65.0
Evaluation instrument for LMSs by administrators	17	65.0
Copyright laws and Fair Use for education purposes	16	62.0
Automated online catalog and circulation system	15	58.0
Funding sources and financial accountability	15	58.0
Promotion of programs available via cable TV and satellite	14	54.0
Collection development and management of materials	14	54.0
Local, state, and national professional organizations	13	50.0
Assignment of a buddy or mentor	11	43.0
Instructional units for information literacy skills	10	38.0

Generally, all topics/activities were of interest to new library media

specialists. Interestingly, the activity-- "Assignment of a buddy or mentor" and the topic-- "Instructional units for information literacy skills" received great emphasis in the review of the literature but were ranked lowest in usefulness by respondents, 43% and 38% respectively. Assignment of a mentor or buddy was not included in 29.7% of the orientation programs. The topic related to information literacy skills was not presented in 35.1% of the orientation programs.

Questionnaire item twenty was an open-ended question soliciting topics and/or activities library media specialists felt would have been useful if included in the orientation program. Seven library media specialists (18.9%) provided no additional topics/activities, while two (5.4%) desired more coverage of information literacy skills. The remaining seventeen (45.9%) either desired more information on several topics/activities listed on the questionnaire or offered other suggestions. These suggestions included collaborating with teachers, flexible scheduling, interpersonal skills, mentoring, budgeting, job description, and writing grant proposals.

Questionnaire item twenty-one allowed the eleven library media specialists, who had not participated in a formal orientation program, to indicate the alternative orientation experience provided by the school system. Of the eleven respondents answering this question, five (13.5%) received a

site visit from the system-level media coordinator or designee; four (10.8%) participated in a combination of activities that included site visits, discussion of handbooks and evaluation instrument, assignment of a mentor, and visits to other library media centers. One respondent (2.7%) received handbooks from the principal, and one (2.7%) indicated no orientation experience was provided.

Research Question Three

Who provided professional support to new library media specialists? What were the frequencies of contact and quality of the support? To answer this research question, questionnaire items twenty-two through thirty-five were developed.

Thirteen categories for personnel, along with one electronic category, were provided as options for rating the frequency of contact and quality of support. In reporting the data for this research question, the percentages for the quality of support at the superior and satisfactory levels were combined, thus reflecting a single composite percentage for the two levels.

Frequency of contact between the library media specialist and others in the local school was combined for the frequency of daily and weekly generating one composite frequency. Library media clerks and technology

specialists traditionally work closely with the library media specialists in maintaining the resources and computer equipment in the library media center. Daily and weekly interactions were rated at 81.1% for library media clerks and at 70.2% for technology specialists. The quality of support received from library media clerks was rated 73.5% at the superior/satisfactory level. For technology specialists, a slighter higher rating of 77.8% was given at the combined levels of superior/satisfactory.

Daily and weekly contact with the principal or other building administrator was 91.6%, and the quality of support was rated superior/satisfactory by 72.8% of the respondents. Library media specialists noted daily and weekly contact with teachers at 97.2% and the quality of support was rated superior/satisfactory by 87.9% of the respondents.

How frequently system-level media coordinators contacted new library media specialists was best characterized as monthly (38.2%) and quarterly (26.5%), with a 78.8% quality of support rating of at the superior/satisfactory level. Seven (20.6%) reported no contact with the system-level media coordinator.

Support meetings for new library media specialists were reported as quarterly events by 55.6% of the respondents. Superior/ satisfactory rating for quality of support was 68.8%. Eleven (30.6%) reported no contacts

through support meetings.

The range of frequency of contact between the new library media specialist and the assigned mentor or buddy varied widely--daily (25.7%), weekly (5.7%), quarterly (17.1%), and no contact (42.9%). From these interactions, the respondents rated the quality of support 72.9% at the superior/satisfactory level, and 29.6% no support.

The quality of support received from former classmates in the library media graduate program was rated superior/satisfactory by respondents at a level of 83.3%. However, communications among classmates were a monthly (37.1%) or quarterly (20%) occurrence. Nine (25.7%) reported no contact with these individuals.

The category of "friends who are LMSs, **but not** former classmates" revealed higher percentages for weekly (27%) and monthly (37.8%) contacts. This group of supporters provided a superior/ satisfactory rating of 85.7%.

Little communication occurred between new LMSs and professionals external to the school system--former professors from a graduate program (27.8%), telementoring via e-mail(26.5%), retired library media specialists (20.6%). The quality of support reflected this lack of communication and was rated very low at the superior/satisfactory level--former professors (45.5%), telementoring via e-mail (38.0%) and retired library media specialists

library media specialists (20.6%).

Frequency of contact with public librarians was best described as a 50/50 arrangement--combined contact (22.2%) monthly and (25%) quarterly--and no contact at 47.2%. While communications between new library media specialists and public librarians were evenly divided as marginally existing or non-existent, the quality of support received was rated 60.9% for the level of superior/satisfactory.

Almost 90% of the respondents did not list another category of supporter. Those listed were compatible with the fourteen categories listed in the questionnaire.

Questionnaire item thirty-six provided respondents an opportunity to share problems they encountered in beginning their assignment. Twenty-nine percent stated old, outdated print collections and audiovisual equipment were the largest problems. Nineteen library media specialists (50%) provided a potpourri of problems--cataloging and ordering suitable materials, lack of technical support, weeding print and audiovisual collections, teachers' lack of understanding about the purpose of the library media center, and automation of the online public access catalog and circulation system. For comments, see Appendix C.

Research Question Four

Which informational resources were helpful to new library media specialists in fulfilling their responsibilities? Questionnaire items thirty-seven through forty-seven permitted respondents to rate ten types of resources using a scale of "helpful" to "not accessible."

Table 3 reflects the data. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and listed in rank order in the column labeled **Helpful.**

Table 3

Helpfulness of Informational Reference Resources

N=38

LMSs---Library Media Specialists

Informational Resources	**Helpful** Percentage	**Somewhat Helpful** Percentage	**Not Helpful** Percentage	**Not Accessible** Percentage
Locally-Developed Resources				
A roster of school faculty and staff	84.0	13.0	3.0	0.0
A roster of LMSs in school system	79.0	16.0	3.0	3.0
Calendar of media reports, national and state conferences, celebrations	62.0	19.0	0.0	19.0
Local school handbook	62.0	22.0	8.0	8.0
Local LMS handbook	38.0	38.0	8.0	16.0

Informational Resources	**Helpful** Percentage	**Somewhat Helpful** Percentage	**Not Helpful** Percentage	**Not Accessible** Percentage
Externally-Developed Resources				
Professional journals & magazines	63.0	34.0	0.0	3.0
Quality Core Curriculum or school system curriculum guides	36.0	44.0	14.0	6.0
Southern Assoc. of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Standards	33.0	50.0	3.0	14.0
Textbooks from graduate school	22.0	61.0	14.0	3.0
You Are the Key by GA Dept. of Ed.	16.0	42.0	10.0	32.0

In evaluating informational resources, locally-produced publications relating to the individual school and school system and professional periodicals were the most helpful. A ranking of "Helpful" was measured at fifty percent or more. Rosters of library media specialists in the school system and individuals in the local school were extremely helpful, as noted by the high percentages. Two externally-produced resources-- "SACS Standards," and "Textbooks from graduate school"-- were deemed "Somewhat Helpful" by at least half of the respondents. The resource rated most inaccessible was the *Media Specialist Handbook: You Are the Key*, available from the Georgia Department of Education.

For questionnaire item 47 respondents listed two other informational resources deemed helpful in fulfilling their responsibilities--the Internet and the manual for the automated circulation software.

Research Question 5

Who encouraged or invited new library media specialists to participate in professional development activities? How helpful were these activities to new library media specialists? Questionnaire items 48-56 were designed to answer these research questions.

Responses to questionnaire item forty-eight are listed in Table 4. Percentages are listed in rank order and rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 4

Personnel Encouraging New Library Media Specialists to Participate in Professional Development Activities

N=35

Personnel Encouraging Participation in Professional Development Activities	Frequency and Percentage	
Other library media specialists	7	20.0
System-level media coordinator, LMSs, & principal	6	17.0
Others added by respondents Parents (1); Reading Coordinator (1); LMS for internship and college professor(1); GA Listserv (1); Technology specialist (1)	5	14.0
System-level media coordinator	5	14.0
System-level media coordinator and principal	4	11.0
System-level media coordinator and LMSs	3	9.0
Other combinations of personnel listed in #48	3	9.0
Principal	2	6.0

The effort to identify the activities most helpful in maintaining professional development was unsuccessful. A ranking scale of 1-6 was provided, but the instruction to make "1" the highest and "6" the lowest was not stated. Thus, results were not reported for this question. This investigation should be part of a future study.

Chapter 5

Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion

After evaluating the results of the questionnaire the following findings were evident.

1. New library media specialists participated in group orientation programs generally scheduled before the beginning of the school year. These programs were facilitated by the system-level media coordinator or a designee, and conducted for one to three days.

2. Topics related to procedural guidelines for managing the library media center program, implementing local Board of Education policies, and activities related to interacting with other library media specialists in the school system were rated useful. The activity of assigning a buddy or mentor and the topic related to informational literacy skills instructional units were presented in some orientation programs. However, these were omitted in many of the programs.

3. Library media specialists hired after group conducted orientation sessions were generally visited by the system-level media coordinator, who provided an abbreviated, site-based orientation session. The range of topics

discussed were similar to those provided during earlier group orientations. However, a few new library media specialists reported receiving less than an adequate orientation.

4. Survey respondents rated the quality of support from system-level media coordinators, library media clerks, technology specialists, principals, teachers, superior to satisfactory. With a frequency of contact ranging from weekly to quarterly between new library media specialists and former classmates, as well as friends who were library media specialists **but not** former classmates, the levels of support were quite high.

Infrequent contact with former professors from graduate school, retired library media specialists, and other professionals via e-mail was reflected in low quality of or non-existent support. Public librarians received a favorable rating on quality of support in spite of infrequent contacts with new library media specialists.

5. Support meetings for new library media specialists were generally conducted on a quarterly schedule. Respondents rated the meetings productive and meaningful.

6. Most locally-developed informational resources identifying personnel and procedural guidelines for managing the library media program were highly rated "**Helpful**." Professional journals and magazines were also

considered helpful. Resources produced external to the school system and rated as **"Somewhat helpful"** were the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Standards and textbooks from graduate school.

7. New library media specialists received encouragement from system-level and school-level personnel to participate in professional development activities.

Discussion

The high return rate of questionnaires (89.6%) and the prompt return of questionnaires by the requested due date, were strong indicators of respondents' interest in sharing concerns related to their new roles and responsibilities. Responses given to open-ended questions also showed the library media specialists' willingness to contribute suggestions for future program designs. The need to capture and sustain this interest and enthusiasm has continued to be an important goal. To achieve this goal two strategies have been identified-- inclusion of newer library media specialists on orientation teams, and inviting these professionals to serve as mentors. The second of these strategies, mentoring, was confirmed by a respondent's comment. "I got most of my support from a library media specialist who had just 1 year more experience than I. She could relate to my problems [and]

knew what to do" (Appendix D, p. 79).

The system-level media coordinator is a key person in conducting orientation programs, proving professional support, and encouraging library media specialists to participate in professional development activities. The question could be asked, "In the absence of this key position, are new library media specialists receiving information and support from other individuals and departments that ensure their success?" If the answer is yes, a model outlining this practice would be useful in other school districts. If the answer is no, another question is generated. "What were the possibilities of sharing existing models of orientation and support programs with school systems where a system-level media coordinator has not been appointed?" This research study was not designed to provide answers to these questions. Thus, future studies might address these questions.

Support meetings.

Quarterly support meetings were rated positive, but increasing the number to bimonthly could also prove beneficial. Such a schedule would provide more time to answer questions of "How would you handle..." and discussions of action plans for answering those questions. Support meetings also would allow opportunities for library media specialists to share

successful program endeavors, instructional units, as well as useful tips on a variety of topics.

As a second recommendation agenda items for support meetings could target the topics listed by new library media specialists for questionnaire item 20,"*...items not included in the orientation program, but would have been helpful*" and those problems library media specialists encountered in establishing a library media program, as noted in questionnaire item 36.

Mentoring.

Mentoring has been well documented in the literature as a successful strategy for retaining new teachers. Other than two periodical references, there was very little about mentoring programs for library media specialists in the literature review. The following comment written by a respondent emphasized this point of having a mentor or buddy.

> I've pretty much had to learn things about being a library media specialist on my own. No one at the school has any empathy or understands what I do and it can be VERY frustrating. I owe a great deal of gratitude to other library media specialists (LMSs) in the county for their help. There needs to be a better support system for new LMSs. It has been a very difficult 2 years. (Appendix D, p. 78)

This marginal presence of a mentoring program, as noted by some new library media specialists, suggested this strategy was underutilized. Strengthening the support network for new library media specialists would be helpful, especially for those working as the only professional in the library media center. With the availability of information on mentoring, revitalization of existing programs, or establishment of a program would be a possibility. Also, by including a component for telementoring via regional or national listservs, new library media specialists could be encouraged to expand their computer retrieval skills and gather suggestions from hundreds of peers around the world.

From another perspective, the low representation of mentoring activities among library media specialists in the literature may simply be the hesitancy of school systems to report viable programs in educational publications. Therefore, if school systems have successful mentoring programs for library media specialists they should publish them.

Book Collections.

The major problem encountered by many respondents dealt with outdated book collections and old, inoperable audiovisual equipment. The

media specialists, for it has been a national crisis for several years. The "1993-94 *School Library Journal Survey...*" (Miller & Shontz, 1995) and the "1995-96 *School Library Journal Survey...*" (Miller & Shontz, 1997), along with the article "Materials Budget Shrinking" (1997), indicate book budgets are continuing to decrease. This historical cycle of insufficient funds, coupled with the perennial raising costs of library media books, at an average of $2.84 over the last ten years (Gerhardt, 1998, p. 79), provided validity to this concern. Another valid consideration possibly fueling this stagnation has been the fact that greater amounts of money have been expended on computer software. (Materials Budgets Shrinking, 1997, p. 19)

Olson (1995), in recapping the news for 1995 stated, "[The] biennial survey of school library expenditures in *SLJ*'s *[School Library Journal]* October 1995 issue shows that 25 percent of library media centers now have Internet access, but book collection dollars remain static" (p. 27). Andrea Glick (1998) wrote concerning President Clinton's proposed FY '99 federal budget, "On the bright side for schools, the president would provide additional money to help buy hardware and software and train teachers to use technology" (p. 92).

Conclusion

Individuals beginning a career as a library media specialist have opportunities to contribute to the educational experience of students, to collaborate with teachers on instructional strategies, and to promote the goals of the profession. These opportunities occur simultaneously as the library media specialist fulfills the roles of information specialist, teacher, and instructional consultant. To retain these professionals, school systems have the privilege of providing meaningful and useful orientation programs and professional support networks.

Designing orientation activities that are responsive to library media specialists' employment histories, and to the responsibilities the new professional will perform in implementing an effective library media program remains crucial. System-level media coordinators, who generally conduct the orientation programs, must be attentive to not creating an "information overload" during the orientation program. To assist with this endeavor, provisions should be made to distribute informational resources that give directions for procedural practices, outline curriculum goals and content, and identify other professionals in the local school and school system who lend support in fulfilling the new assignment.

With new library media specialists receiving the highest quality of

support from other library media specialists, mentoring programs have possibilities for strengthening the professional support program. Consideration of commonalities among mentoring models is a worthy investment in adapting mentoring models for library media specialists. And where members of the local school community serve as supporters for new library media specialists, this connection should be encouraged.

With a strong career initiated through orientation programs, maintained through networks of supporters and informational resources, renewed by professional development activities, new library media specialists are better prepared to usher students, teachers, administrators, and parents into the 21st century.

Future Investigations

In the review of the literature and from respondents' perceptions about orientation programs and professional support networks, the following questions were not addressed in this research project. Each has been offered as a possibility for future investigations.

1. What are the components of a mentoring model that could be useful in supporting new library media specialists?

2. What are the perceptions of new library media specialists regarding professional development?
3. To what degree are new library media specialists fulfilling the role of an instructional consultant? Are there any inhibitors?
4. Should orientation programs be separate for library media specialists or be included in the general orientation program with teachers?

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APPENDICES

March 24, 1998

Dear Colleague,

You can make a difference! As a new library media specialist with **two or fewer years of experience,** you have been selected to share your perceptions about the orientation and support programs provided by your school system.

Please take a few minutes and complete the attached survey. Your responses will be valuable in redesigning or designing orientation presentations, and professional support programs. The survey and its results are in partial fulfillment of the Specialist in Education Degree at Georgia State University.

Your consent of participation will be demonstrated by your completion and return of the enclosed questionnaire. The enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope is being provided for your convenience **in returning the completed survey by Friday, April 3, 1998.** Thank you for investing time in making a difference for future library media specialists.

Sincerely,

Juanita Buddy

Dr. Rosalind Miller
Advisor

Perceptions of New Library Media Specialists about Their Orientation and Professional Support Programs

Library media specialists with two or fewer years of experience should complete this survey.
(LMS stands for library media specialist. LMC stands for library media center.)

****

Orientation Program

1. Did you participate in an orientation program specifically designed for LMS **before** you began your current assignment? **Yes _____ (Complete this section.)** **No _____ (Please go to page 2.)**

2. Who conducted the orientation? (Check all that apply.)
Media coordinator ___ LMS___ Principal ___ Teacher___ Clerk____ Other: (list) _____
3. Give the month and year of the orientation specifically designed for LMS. **Month___ Year_____**
4. How long was the orientation program? Less than 1 day ___ 1 day ____ 2 days____3+ days _____
5. How many days did you attend? Less than 1 day ___ 1 day ____ 2 days____3+ days _____

Check the column that describes usefulness of the topic/activities to your current responsibilities.

Orientation Topics/Activities	Useful	Not Useful	Unsure of Usefulness	Not Presented
6. Assignment of a buddy or mentor				
7. Introduction of central office personnel				
8. An informal social event to meet other system LMSs				
9. School Board policies and procedures for LMC operations				
10. Funding sources and financial accountability				
11. Guidelines for purchasing all resources				
12. Collection development and management of materials				
13. Leadership and role of the media committee				
14. Evaluation instrument for LMS by administrators, i.e., Georgia Media Specialist Evaluation Program (GMSEP)				
15. Instructional units for information literacy skills				
16. Copyright laws and Fair Use for educational purposes				
17. Automated online catalog and circulation system				
18. Promotion of programs available via cable TV & satellite				
19. Local, state, and national professional organizations				

20. List topics/activities **you felt should have been included** that would be useful in your current position. _____

_____

_____

21. **If you answered "No" to Question 1,** describe any activity that resembled an orientation program, e.g., distribution of handbooks, assigned to visit other LMCs, site visits by coordinator.

Professional Support Program

Circle the **frequency of contact in column 1.**
Circle **the quality of support in column 2. (1-Superior; 2-Satisfactory; 3-Unsatisfactory; 0-None)**

Sources of Support	**Frequency of Contact** 1-Daily 2-Weekly 3-Monthy 4-Quarterly 0-None	**Quality of Support** (Rate 1, 2, 3, or 0)
22. Central office supervisors	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
23. An assigned library media specialist as mentor or buddy	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
24. Mentoring via e-mail, e.g., LM_Net	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
25. Support meetings for new LMSs	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
26. Former classmate(s) from a graduate program	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
27. Former professor(s) from a graduate program	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
28. Friends who are LMSs, **but not** former classmates	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
29. Retired LMS(s)	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
30. Library media clerk or paraprofessional	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
31. Public librarian(s)	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
32. Principal or other school administrator	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
33. Technology specialist	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
34. Teacher(s)	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0
35. Other: (List)	1 2 3 4 0	1 2 3 0

36. What problems , e.g., weeding of collection, old audiovisual equipment, low budget, did you encounter when you began your current position?

Informational Reference Resources

Check the column to the right that best describes your perceptions about the usefulness of the resources **accessible to in fulfilling your current responsibilities.**

Accessible Information Reference Resources	**Helpful**	**Somewhat Helpful**	**Not Helpful**	**Not Accessible**
37. A local library media specialist handbook				
38. Calendars of media report dates, annual national/state conferences and celebrations				
39. A roster of other LMSs in the school system				
40. A local school handbook				
41. A roster of school faculty and staff				
42. *You Are the Key* by the GA Dept. of Educ.				
43. Southern Assoc. of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Standards				
44. Quality Core Curriculum or school system curriculum and curriculum guides				
45. Professional textbooks from graduate school				
46. Professional journals and magazines				
47. Other: (list)				

Professional Development

48. Check the position of the individual(s) encouraging or inviting you to participate in professional development activities. **Media Coordinator _____LMSs _____Principal ____ Teacher(s) _____ Other (list)_____**

Rank the activities (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) in their overall usefulness in helping you maintain your professional development.

Professional Development Activities	**Rank Order of Usefulness (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)**
49. Reading professional magazines and journals	
50. Participating in professional associations	
51. Attending professional conferences	
52. Participating in listservs, e.g., LM_Net	
53. Participating in staff development classes	
54. Enrolling in graduate school courses	
55. Serving on school committees	
56. Other: (list)	

General Information

Please provide the following information.

Highest degree earned: Bachelor's ____ Master's ____ Specialist in Education ___ Doctorate _____

Current school assignment: Elementary _____ Middle _____ High School ____ Other (list)_____

Length of experience as a library media specialist: _____

How many **library media specialists** are assigned to your school? (Including yourself) _____

How many **library media clerks** are assigned to your school? _____

List your last two employment assignments **before** your current position.

1. _____ 2. _____

Comments/Words of Wisdom: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for sharing your experiences.

Please return this completed survey by April 3, 1998 in the self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Juanita Buddy.

Appendix C

Initial Problems New Library Media Specialists Encountered

Questionnaire Item 36

"Lack of technical support from my technology supervisor; Lack of any coherent orientation, as I was hired just one week before beginning my assignment."

"Circulat[ion] system not working; collection has not been weeded before conversion; many items are lost or missing; card catalogs (3) completely out of order; no record of current inventory of equipment throughout the school; many pieces of damaged and old equipment."

"Weeding of collection--difficult to decide yet I hope to be more comfortable weeding things with experience."

"Weeding, discarding AV equipment, disorganized card catalog."

"The media center is not automated. School system offers no assistance in getting automated. Collection hasn't been weeded in years. Teachers unfamiliar with the way a media center should be run."

"I had to automate my media center by myself. This was very time consuming for a first year media specialist."

"Lack of support, cruel faculty members, low budget, inoperable automated system, no technical support."

"We're in a rebuild mode--Center in extremely bad shape."

"Knowing what to do when..."

"So much to learn--I have a 19 year teaching background so that part was easier--learning all the management stuff was harder."

"Old AV equipment; need for major weeding, but need to balance with need to replace and purchase new materials within budget and SACS [standards]; need to update video and increase collection if planning to weed filmstrips."

"High number of students; not feeling really prepared; 'politics' of school."

"Learning how to use all the broadcast equipment; none of the 4 PC computers were working; a lot of disorganization with last years' materials; found materials in boxes and no one knew where they come from or how long they had been there; no one explained my budget to me and later on I found out that monies had been spend but not deducted."

"Old A/V equipment, not enough A/V equipment."

"Understaffed; opened new school with only [a half-time] clerk."

"The struggle of convincing everybody that updates in technology should occur in media center and not just the classrooms & labs."

"Purchase orders; understanding of network; faculty needs/wants (not familiar with curriculum); materials left uncataloged; materials that were outdated, but not yet discarded."

"Old A/V equipment, outdated files, disorganization, outdated software"

"Maintenance of audiovisual equipment was a problem. Learning to use satellite system was a problem."

"Collection in bad need of weeding; media center needed organizing; inventory not updated properly; outdated/non-functional equipment in need of discard."

"One fourth to one-third of the collection is 20-30 years old. Starting after the beginning of the year had to initial orientation. Learning the collection and curriculum in order to order wisely is mentally exhausting. I am still reading the shelves in my sleep. We are able to choose vendors to order from--it is nice in some ways but does make things/decision making more complicated. Teachers are resistant to collaborative planning and would like me to be a 'special'; they want regularly scheduled times. I've also had to work on rearranging space/furniture as it was not inviting or 'people friendly."

"No budget, scheduling classes, and obtaining things to update computers (such as memory, etc.)"

"None of the Internet connections were working until after the first of the year. There was conflicting information about what was being done and about what I needed to do to get our stations up and running. I had one teacher who had an ongoing project with another school who was most impatient. Also, the satellite dish required extensive adjustment."

"Weeding of collection and old av equipment was my first order of duty. I often felt 'forced' to do this much needed chore quickly (av equipment especially) and felt 'put upon' when questioned when are you going to clean out that room, etc.?"

"Total & complete confusion. Did not know answers to the simplest questions."

"All of the above. [Respondent referring to the examples listed in questionnaire item 36.] Media center had no computers from previous 5 years. Technology level was very low. Low budget not really a problem; it just needed to be redirected a bit."

"Collection in bad shape, old equipment, lost books and payment at registration; Had not been warned and not sure how to do it."

"Very old equipment (overheads, tape recorders, VCRs, TVS) and not enough equipment. Not enough money; non-fiction books outdated; not enough multi-media computers; outdated software; half-time clerk for a full-time job."

"Finding time to do everything."

"All of the above plus training on database and inventory management. ["All of the above"- Respondent referring to examples listed in questionnaire item 36.]

"The biggest problem was convincing the teachers that I was qualified to do the job. Often times they would request 'the other LMS' when I was available to help. They would also 'second guess' the answers I was giving them as if I had no clue as to what I was talking about." [Respondent reported two LMSs working in the media center in the demographic section of the questionnaire.]

"Not knowing how to keep a ledger properly."

"Poor records on audiovisual equipment--no manuals, etc.; collection had not been weeded for at least 15 years."

"Weeding of collection; figuring out what computers, technology to buy."

"There were no rules about checkout, number of students sent to media center, or anything else. Trying to establish some structure in the midst of chaos resulted in anger and resentment from teachers who had been use to doing what they wanted and taking what they wanted. Attempts to regulate a.v. checkout and scheduling were ignored or were deliberately sabotaged. The Media Committee was not supportive."

"Need to catalog and order suitable materials."

"Old a.v. equipment, no supplies, automation, no teaching (media skills) materials."

Appendix D

Comments/Words of Wisdom Given by New Library Media Specialists

"You are on your own. If you don't reach out for help, you'll never any program. It's there--find it!"

"I feel that it is really important to meet other LMSs to see what is working/not working in their work environment. By visiting other LMCs you are able to get ideas [that] might otherwise not have [been] thought about. Looking at the same 'four walls' week after week wears me down, so I get rejuvenated when I talk to/visit my library media friends."

"Time management classes are needed."

"Always have a strong support system for first year media specialists. It makes it easier to do a good job when you are not standing alone. I was blessed because I learned a lot as a media assistant."

"This is fun."

"It (going to school and attaining a goal) was worth it. A great profession to be in."

"Thanks for asking. I do think graduate school and the "real world" of elementary school are not the same. I felt I needed more training."

"Good luck."

"On-the-job experience, especially with a wonderful media clerk has been my best teacher. A mentor is very important--someone to turn to for answers, feedback, advice, etc."

"Experience teaches you a world of wisdom that textbooks do not!"

"Maintain contact with fellow media specialists--great stores of information are available just by dialing the phone."

"I've pretty much had to learn things about being a library media specialist. on my own. The media program at college was not [the] "real world." No one at the school has any empathy or understands what I do and it can be VERY frustrating. I owe a great deal of gratitude to other LMSs in the county for their help. There needs to be a better support system for new LMSs. It has been a very difficult 2 years."

"Need more practical information in school--setting up an electronic consideration file, exposure to operating circulation systems; perhaps some role playing--how to work with teachers at different levels--(elementary, middle, high school), a clearer understanding of day-to-day differences; more reading literature instruction, attracting and keeping volunteers; where to find reviews of teach resource books; importance of maintaining a good teacher's collection; time management. It would be nice to have a peer group--classmates to meet with and share experiences."

"I have learned not to be so structured in my day-to-day planning because 'the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry.' Because there is always something to do, I do what I can on those days when I can't do what I would like to [have] done."

"The best advice was 'Admit that you are new. If you don't know something or make a big mistake, admit it and go there from there."

"Wish someone would have shown examples of bookkeeping
-when placing book orders
-books for consideration
Wish there was a brief overview of the curriculum, i.e.
6th grade oceans, endangered forests, ...
7th grade animals, plants, ecosystems.
There should be a hands-on workshop experience in the automated system, i.e., how to check in/out books, pay fines, printout fines [reports], overdue reports, enter a student into the system."

"As in teaching, much more is learned on the job than in meetings or class, or in books on a listserv or in a discussion or...anywhere!"

"I got most of my support from a library media specialist who had just 1 year more experience than I. She could relate to my problems but knew what to do. The support sessions by Educational Media (central office personnel) would have been more useful if [it] focused on an upcoming procedure and instructional ideas.

An all day-meeting 2-3 weeks into the job would be a better orientation. Would know what people were talking about. First orientation before school starts should cover basics--Winnebago, collecting money, starting up everything. Then move on to other things."

"The biggest handicap for those in smaller school is having a half-time clerk. 500 students do not require half as much work as 700 students."

"DeKalb County (School System) has a great support from its library media coordinators. Anytime I've encountered problems, I just call Ed. Media. They have been great."

My biggest challenge is encouraging the teachers to work with me. I have lots of ideas that could make their lessons more enjoyable, but they are reluctant to try them. I would tell any new library media specialist not to be

discouraged by this, but to concentrate on those that do want your help. Perhaps over time other teachers will see the wonderful activities. You plan and [teachers] will come to ask for help too."

"I love my work."

"A mentor/buddy would be wonderful. Visiting other schools should be required! Principals need more training on promoting their services."